

THE PLAIN VIEW

JANUARY 1949

Fantasy and Reality in Religion

M. L. BURNET

The Breadth of a Line

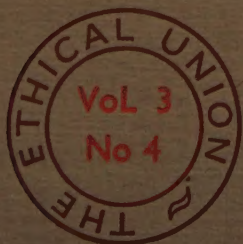
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THE PLAIN VIEW

A HUMANIST JOURNAL CONCERNED WITH HUMAN RELATIONS AND WITH
THE QUALITY OF LIVING

Οὐδεν ἱκανὸν ὧ ὀλίγον το ἱκανόν

—EPICURUS

Nothing is sufficient for him to whom what is sufficient seems little

UBERTATES ET COPIAE VIRTUTIS

—CICERO

the productiveness and the resources of human quality

THIS IS THAT WHICH WILL INDEED DIGNIFY AND EXALT KNOWLEDGE, IF
CONTEMPLATION AND ACTION MAY BE MORE NEARLY AND STRAITLY
CONJOINED AND UNITED TOGETHER THAN THEY HAVE BEEN; A
CONJUNCTION LIKE UNTO THAT OF THE TWO HIGHEST PLANETS, SATURN
THE PLANET OF REST AND CONTEMPLATION, AND JUPITER, THE PLANET
OF CIVIL SOCIETY AND ACTION.

—BACON

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COMMENTARY

SOcial DEMOCRACY. No word has been more wrenched and strained in current usage than the word democracy. It came from the vocabulary of a social science, and is a hoarse slogan. It was nicely brought up, and is promiscuous. But we who are engaged in its service have to show forth its praise not only in our lives but with our lips. Fortunately we are all amateurs of semantics nowadays, and don't need a political dictionary to make our discriminations for us. Nevertheless, reflections upon the essential content of the democratic idea may not be quite worthless.

In the politics of Athens no less than in the politics of our own times there is the notion of democracy as the equal participation of all in political life, and the notion of democracy as the rule of the people (that is, the unprivileged) over the rest. The open iniquity of the second is redress for the concealed iniquity of the first. We now call the first notion formal democracy, and mean that all the members of society have the same relation to the political means of exercising power; and the second is well enough called a people's democracy, and means that all the members of society have the same relation to the social means of economic production. Of course the result in the first case is not necessarily equality in political power, nor in the second case equality in material goods: they are both formal democracies, whether political or economic, because in the nature of the case democracy can only be defined formally, in terms of the relations of the members of society. Social democracy ideally contains both the political and the economic elements; at the present time it is the designation preferred by political democrats, but historically it was the name of the working-class party striving for economic democracy.

Recently there has been much discussion about industrial democracy. What exactly is meant by democracy in industry? Does it mean economic democracy, that is, no private property in the means of production; or does it mean control of policy and personnel by the workers both in the factories and in the state; or does it merely mean promotion from the ranks to managerial appointments? The discussion shows some confusion of ideas, and if we say we want more democracy in industry we ought to be sure of what we are talking about and make it clear in discussions that we are talking about the same thing. There is considerable difference between the more industrial democracy which can only be got by political struggle and the more which can be had almost for the asking, by administrative arrangement. Democratic forms and procedures are the product of historical

experience in human relations, and they apply to any kind of human association. Ideally, the democratic pattern is reproduced in all social relations, as the vital functions of organic life are found in all forms of living matter. A voluntary society may be, and usually is, democratically organized and run. Should not a factory be so organized and run? What is meant: that the management is appointed by the workers, is answerable to them and may be recalled and replaced at will? Pretty obviously, the only form tolerable in a voluntary society is inadmissible in a factory. Nor will it do to have the whole factory governed by a works' committee. On the other hand, it is not enough merely to secure that all the likely workers are selected and trained for managerial appointments. The only good reason why it won't do to have the factory run by the workers is that it is not democracy. It excludes the adequate representation of certain relevant and vital interests, in this case, mainly the public interest.

The most general principle of democracy, its defining essence, its touchstone, is the principle that every interest affected by a decision shall, of right, participate in the making of the decision, and if party to it shall take responsibility for it. Applying the touchstone to common practice in day to day factory management, too many decisions which affect the interests of the workers more or less seriously and might be taken democratically are taken as a matter of course as the prerogative of the management, because that is what management is for. It is in this sense and in this way that more (much more) democracy is wanted in industry. The workers should be fully represented and consulted in the initial stages of policy-making as a matter of course, so that they make themselves party to or dissociate themselves from the decisions taken which affect their interests. Any decision of this sort involves many interests, and the principle of democracy is that all of them should be adequately represented and their participation taken as necessary to the determination of the decision. The machinery for taking the decision when unanimity is not achieved is another matter. In the case of the factory, on any important question, it is not likely to be by majority vote, but, as in collective bargaining, by negotiation, with the withdrawal of the workers if unanimity is not reached, and their dissociation from the decision taken.

Democracy is a radical form of education, for participation as of right in collective decisions induces some modification of claims, the influence of interests upon one another, the determination of what is reasonable interest and the establishment of elements of

common interest. Democracy as a creative vital process has no substitute, and none of the sham forms which are sold as even better should be preferred by anyone who really wants the human cause to prosper. In this case of industrial democracy, the main difficulty has been that managements represent the interests of owners, and the driving interest of owners is necessarily profit-making. There are many lines of coincidence in owners' and workers' interests, but also many lines of divergence, and outright cross purposes. Unless profit-making is allowed to be not only a legitimate interest but also an overruling interest, it is hard to see how private industrial undertakings can be carried on. This real difficulty is not often in practice a hopeless dilemma, or private enterprise would have worked even worse than it has. Nor is nationalization, from the workers' point of view, a simple solution; since the workers' immediate interest will often lie with the interests of the private firm rather than with the drastic changes which may be required in the public interest. In a democracy, all interests are sacred and none is sacrosanct. The bitter objections of minorities protesting against proposed changes have often to be overruled. There are real and stubborn difficulties, intractable and insoluble problems, in the reasonable adjustment of legitimate interests; but there remains a world of difference between arbitrary decisions and decisions democratically determined. Such decisions, let it be insisted, require the participation of all affected interests, represented by persons satisfactory to those interests. What consideration is given to the interests represented is of course largely a question of power, but the interest most widely shared, in the long run, tends to have the greatest power. It is useless to pretend that political conflicts can be got round or passed by. The point is that democratic politics are the most resourceful method of resolving conflicts, the ultimate reference and the immediate recourse of those whose claims are not embodied in the decisions which affect them.

In a social democracy as in a stick of rock the same pattern and print runs throughout, and no cross-section will reveal social relations or institutions in which it is not to be found. It is an old story, deep in history: "no taxation without representation." Restricted to particular issues, it may be mere obstinacy; universalised, it is social vitality.

FANTASY AND REALITY IN RELIGION

IN the consideration of any subject it is desirable to get as much background material about it as possible in order to get the most comprehensive and authentic picture. This holds good with religion, too, which deals with the question of man's relation to his environment *in toto*, that is the universe. It is important that man should be seen against the cosmic background. Man is the product of blind natural forces. Life has come from unconsciousness. These natural forces produce evolutionary processes favourable to the production of ever more complex types of man, or at least it has done so in the past few millions of years and may continue to do so. Man is caught on an avalanche, only one that within narrow limits he can steer. Within narrow limits man can modify his conduct and environment and by such modifications even prepare the way for the further evolution of his species. Strictly limited as the area is for self-determination, it offers enormous scope for creative endeavour. Consider an art-form such as painting or the ballet: the severe limits of these media yet offer an infinite scope for artistic creation, and occasion an almost infinite range of quality of effort, from the unskilled daub of a novice to an Angelo's Sistine ceiling, from the ugly awkward movements of some uninitiated dancer to the finished performance of the ballerina. There is a resemblance between life and the art of the dancer in its fleeting evanescence. The dance of the ballerina no matter how exquisite is no more than a memory of a few at the most, and probably of none. Perhaps only a fraction of her audience has the requisite discernment to evaluate the performance at all. If the dancer does not get sufficient recompense in dancing for herself there is no other inducement that will make her take the great pains necessary to excel at her art. Life is like this, only with even less appreciation of the individual participant, for there is no audience in which appreciative individuals may be harboured, nothing more than a few friends to note the difference between the uttermost triumph or the greatest futility of performance.

Religion is sometimes depicted as a series of attempts to assess the totality of consciousness as development takes place. The picture is presented of an evolutionary process in which religions are succeeded by more refined successors. There may be something in this, but it is hard to make a judgment with the experience of the two or three thousand years of which we know anything. If the task of religion is to arrive at the most realistic evaluation of the totality of life, a great deal of the effort of religious thinkers has been perverse. It is the revolt against this quality of evanes-

cence in nature, a constant problem in the thoughts of man, that is one of the major preoccupations of religion. Man is constantly seeking to memorialize himself, his associates, and his times. In tales he recounts the deeds of his younger days. He erects memorials to all sorts of events. He endeavours by memorials to write an individual or an event into the very contours of nature in order to defeat time, the pyramids being an example of this mood carried to its most mad extreme. The more maladjusted a people the greater the desire to memorialize. The cluttering of streets with furniture in the shape of memorials is a sign of maladjustment or the dominance of maladjusted elements in a society. In ancient Egypt and other early civilizations there are whole streets of memorials, and the central areas of many modern cities give hospitality to not a few mounted gentlemen and frock-coated parliamentarians in stone or bronze.

It is essential to get it recognized that good and graceful living is sufficient in itself; further, that there is nothing beyond the faculty of self-appreciation. In rare cases events are remembered in history or the works of artists preserved for a few generations, but there is less sense in living a life in the expectation of getting memorialized than there would be to rely on the getting of a living by the purchase of an occasional lottery ticket. Ancestor worship depends upon this wish to be memorialized, the idea that if one worships one's ancestors one will in turn be held in regard; though a parallel motive may be the wish to assure the care of the aged. Against a time scale of millions and billions of years such wishes are seen to be absurd, and even the most massive of memorials such as the pyramids are ephemeral in character. The temporary character of the memorial is admitted in the practice of turning into open spaces old cemeteries in which interments have ceased for some time, or of using them in other ways.

The humanist is by no means free of the desire to defeat time, though he is precluded by his acceptance of the processes of evolution from accepting the idea of a creator, the usual device of the theologian to bring a static conception into a moving world. There is no being to whom all time exists concurrently, so there are conceptions of utopian states of society in which relations are perfect and just and in which change therefore has no place. The holding of utopian views is an indication that the living of life is not considered worthwhile in itself, a state that would be considered pathological did it not apply to a large proportion of mankind living on this planet today.

In the past two decades secular utopias have competed considerably with otherworldliness, the favourite being Soviet Russia,

though a number saw Italy, Germany, and even Japan as the promised land. In former ages, poets and visionaries used to create their utopias on paper; one thinks of More, Johnson, Rousseau, and Morris as distinguished examples of this tendency to idealize life, a proclivity that if used with restraint and control may be of value in emphasizing values that should be stressed in real life. It is a sign of the less rationalistic spirit of the present period that people demand that their utopias should really exist. One does notice though that Russia has one thing in common with the fictitious utopias, that it is out of the way, and it is this factor that has made it wipe the floor with such other fancies of utopians as Germany and Italy with their tens of thousands of visitors.

For probably some seventy to eighty per cent. of the world population, starvation or tyrannical government, or both, is the cause of unhappiness, but unfortunately experience shows that it is not merely the absence of simple necessities such as food and freedom that causes unhappiness. Man is a difficult animal to content. A dog thrown a bone will demonstrate all the outward manifestations of pleasure; man has an intractable nature almost impossible to satisfy. It is in the devising of ways in which pleasurable living may be attained against this intractable nature of man that lies the true purpose of humanist religion. Religion is in bad odour with the rationally minded of the West, as it has been inseparably associated for a matter of fifteen centuries with Christianity with its apocalyptic thinking; but we should not make too much of a phenomenon even so long lived as this, remembering the time scale of human history against which such a period is not of overwhelming significance. Religion is the opium of the people, said Marx, and this is of course true of apocalyptic types of religion; though it must be borne in mind that contrary to the usual picture painted by the Marxists of religion forced upon an unwilling proletariat, there is in fact a very real consumer demand for religion, true as it may be that there are ulterior ends in the support of religions by bureaucracies. Christianity would have died out in the Protestant countries had there not been a very real demand for it. The claim that Britain is a Christian country is not so very far off the truth if one considers the proportion of thinking people that adhere to this faith. Religion is expected to be the central heating of the mind, no matter what the intellectual level of the individual may be. The rationalist is always described by the Christian as one who is cold and remote. Religion is looked upon as the authorized flight to a fantasy world. Humanism is frequently only a more sophisticated flight to the same place. Is there any meaning in the word religion apart from descriptions of fantasy indulging cults?

The developing consciousness of the mind reveals more problems than solutions, or at least, the deficiencies appear before the solutions so that the latter are always in arrears. Furthermore, a society has very limited capacity to store experience, so that the same mistakes constantly recur. To a degree, experience can be stored for a period of a few centuries, perhaps three or four, the rest of recorded history meaning little or nothing to a people. Our attention is turned on one thing and then on another, but not upon everything at once because it is not possible. An examination of history shows periods in which all manner of things were better than they are to-day. Technology is a main interest to-day and we have exceeded the performance of any previous age within this field, but how long this will last it is difficult to predict. Should there be a change of orientation, as there may be, our civilization may disappear. The trouble caused by a people not perceiving that they are pursuing a wrong course is often exceeded by the non-recognition of the fact that the right path is being pursued. The more consciousness is developed the more insignificant the individual, or for that matter the whole human race, appears. That is why we have the unexpected phenomenon of a development of science with its new discoveries and the holding fast to improbable theories of existence. The human situation is far from being a happy one with all the possibilities that exist of things being or going wrong, and is it reasonable to hope that the best possible and most wise course will be always taken? Running through the greater part of religious thinking is to be found a profound discontent with the status of man in the universe.

On a first consideration this fact of discontent with the totality of things appears to be a purely puerile attitude, but the discontent cannot be reasoned away easily, if at all. Man as a whole is probably only an incident in the order of things, and races and nations of fleeting appearance, with the component brick, the individual man, nowhere at all. In nature the individual means nothing to itself though it has meaning for the species. Visiting a nursery one is not greatly moved to notice odd plants that have not succeeded in establishing a healthy life after their kind, or even whole fields of plants that have not done well. Some slight modification in the structure of a single plant may make obsolescent the rest of the species. The same applies to man; an alteration in the genes of an individual may lead in a few generations to the supersession of a nation or the whole human race. A new Ice Age may wipe man out or the cooling of the earth's crust may make life finally insupportable on our planet. This planet with its conditions suitable for the support of human life is in the

nature of a freak amongst millions of planets in which these conditions do not obtain, and even then it is no better than it should be; life is insupportable on parts of it, such as the poles, and even on the best bits the climate is uncomfortable. There is nothing evil in these things in themselves; it is merely in Shakespeare's phrase that thinking on them makes them so. It is the gift of reflection that poisons the life of man. An animal lives his life unsubjected to a whole host of abstract fears that man suffers from. The event is rarely as horrible as the mental picture of it. After the raids had been on in London for about a week it was considered bad form to recount how the bomb had just missed your house by yards, etc. The fight to the death by animal or man is not horrible to the combatants, because the nerves are adjusted during the struggle to the event. It is the lack of importance of the individual, however, which is the greatest affront to his thinking. Man has devised gods who are impervious to processes of nature and is disappointed that he is not one himself. Much theology is concerned with the identification of the individual with these god figures.

At a more personal level the individual may have to live a life handicapped by some heritable ailment which may make life physically or mentally painful. Even if there is no specific defect, a man may not have inherited the genes that he would like to have; he may be conscious of a poverty of intellectual ability, a state which knows no rectification. Apart from any lack of mental acumen, a man may be possessed of a difficult psychological personality reflecting an unstable constitution. There are endless possibilities purely on the personal plane of defective heritable equipment or of accidents producing unsatisfying conditions. There is also the fact that for a large part of life one is largely dependent on others, during youth and old age particularly, for one's mode of life, a factor which increases the chance of unhappy conditions appearing. Then the individual is not a natural unit in himself but requires a mate, another situation which provides the chance of unhappiness through incompatibility of temperament in married life or failure to find a mate. In the wider sphere of relations there is the chance of incompatibility of wills with one's immediate social set, or the occupation of a derogatory station in it, making for deprivation of real wants. To these almost endless possibilities of misfortune, one must add that of political tyranny. Tyranny is a most common experience of man at all times and is particularly prevalent to-day. To live in a state where the expression of one's view may mean incarceration in a prison or penal labour camp, or even death, is a possibility that no man can afford to overlook who

bases his life on reason. Is it any wonder that there should be an impulse towards a flight from reality?

The central teaching of a humanist religion freed from utopianism and fantasy thinking is to emphasize the joy of life, both simply in being as well as in following constructive purposes. It may be that it is impossible altogether to eliminate fantasy thinking, particularly amongst the more unfortunate members of society and the more unfortunate types of societies. There is probably no individual who has never indulged in fantasy thinking, the thing is a matter of degree and also a matter of individual constitution, but there can be, and are, great differences collectively in the approach to reality thinking at different times and amongst different peoples. In the West for approximately 1,000 years between 500 and 1500 the dominance of a fantasy holding cult prevailed, with the establishment in a totalitarian position of the Christian Church; since then a double standard of thinking has developed with, first, the appearance and the gradual increase in scope of a secular, rational approach to the practical side of life and, then, the steady withdrawal of religion into a mere adjunct to the more important secular side of life. A humanist religion would bring the religious side of life into congruence with the secular side.

If we wish to propagate a humanism which is not merely a surrogate for the traditional apocalyptic religions we must realize the magnitude of our task and all the difficulties involved. The person who says that the leading of the good life is perfectly simple, that it is only necessary for people to be reasonable and considerate and all will be well, etc., although he may not know it, is a candidate for the apocalyptic's band-wagon. We have to admit the great complexity of life and the many possibilities of frustration, and even that there may be many through some defect in physical or psychic constitution who are radically unfitted for the plain way of life. Particular attention must be paid to political factors for two reasons, one that many factors on the material side of life are governed communally, and the other that the preservation of civil liberties on which depends the correct development of the personality is a political matter. In addition to special factors, it is true to say that the quality of life is dependent on culture, a social product. It is true to say of the Ethical Movement that it was the first religious body in modern times to realize the importance and place of the former to religious life. It is sad to reflect, however, that while much progress has been made in the realization of this importance of communal provision, the civil liberty side which seemed so secure at the time of the floating of the Ethical Move-

ment in the eighties of last century has suffered serious setbacks. In little, this shows the difficulty of the human situation; there are more factors to be taken into consideration than our minds are capable of coping with. One takes two steps forward and one back, and often two back for one forward. The two modes are the difference between progression and retrogression, and it is hard, taking a given period of history, to determine to which mode it belongs.

The temper required by the humanist conscious of all the difficulties that beset the path is one of sober realism, spurning the trivial optimisms that masquerade as religion. His function in calling his companions and himself back to reality and away from fantasy is the direct opposite of that of the traditional religionist whose function so often is to make people otherworldly. Constantly we have to bring ourselves to the task of deciding between fantasy and fact, the impracticable and the practical. Each one of us is surrounded by an area of fact and experience, a mass of which from the sheer point of view of economy we cannot investigate immediately, if at all. In this vague mass of material surrounding us can be concealed things that are or can become important and about which people who would not knowingly pursue a fantasy course, unwittingly do so. Marginal fantasy thought is a real danger, though plain straightforward fantasy pattern creation is not such a rare thing as to make it not worth a warning, too. All the time we must be pointing to the danger of unhinged fancy, though at the same time we must be on our guard against the opposite error of nihilism. Living fruitfully and effectively requires good balance between these two extremes of fantasy and nihilism, and like every factor in good living it is a matter of artistry. We must get away from the illusion that to be natural is to be nice. What is often spoken of approvingly as natural conduct is in fact highly cultivated conduct.

We must be on our guard against patterns of conduct that are applied to situations whether or not the action is appropriate to the event. The rebel attitude is an example of one that is often misused, or there is the moral indignation of the non-conformist, than which there is nothing more harmful to the cause of good government if used indiscriminately. It is quite easy to see how such a pattern is formed. People of inferior class or status see wrongs being committed and react against them; in reacting in this way they have pleasure in the letting-off of steam and the moral glow and feeling of superiority that this gives them a vis-à-vis those of superior social status, and it is no wonder that many of such people feel that they want to retain this moral glow and will

do all they can to find circumstances that appear to justify the line of conduct that produces it. There is nothing more harmful to good government than this, because to keep good, sensitive types in public life it is necessary to provide the recognition that good conduct should bring. It is often said in mitigation of this error that it acts as a corrective to the smug and the time-servers who are willing to greet everything done by those in authority with approbation, but nothing can be farther from the truth. Automatic criticism can only serve to justify smugness and complacency.

We have mentioned those who by defective physical or psychological constitution find the leading of the good life especially difficult; our obvious duty here is by our understanding and through specific public provision to make their lot an easier one, though anything we do may not be in fact sufficient. There is a special class that wants particular attention and that is the racial minority that is spurned. It is necessary to say "is spurned" because it is not infrequently the case that a minority is in a position of privilege. The principal minority trouble in Britain of course is that of anti-semitism and, needless to say, everything should be done to counteract it in its every manifestation and the problem should be studied in order that ways may be found of avoiding some or all of them. Fantasy thinking takes a particularly heavy toll amongst minorities because it is difficult or almost impossible for such people to find a happy outcome for themselves in the life of the outside world. It is not realized by many what great despondence is felt in being regarded as in some way inferior in status, a condition different to that of the individual suffering from the disparagement felt for an inferior class in society who however feels solidarity with his own kind and does not suffer therefore from that isolation felt by the individual of a minority.

Everyone, no matter what his position in life may be, must be impressed with the need of self-cultivation, and the need to help others to achieve self-cultivation, for the leading of a worthy life and a real one in the sense that resort is not made to fantasy to bolster morale. Everyone would really rather achieve moderate success in real life than achieve unlimited successes in a dream world of their own imagination. Just as the young school child would find more satisfaction in achieving a moderate success in the classroom or on the football field than in being all sorts of heroes within his own fertile imagination, so the ordinary person would rather achieve moderate success at his work, with his friends, and in his home than indulge in dreams of all manner of fantasy worlds, that is to say, unless his will has been radically sapped by prolonged indulgence in such fantasizing. Apart from actual

fantasying, the person must be impressed with the artistry of life and of living, and of life as a whole in every manifestation; fine behaviour must not be just the gilt on the gingerbread, nor is it the case that people just fail in the production of good manners, often. It is frequently the case that people who shine in their profession or occupation take not the slightest pains to qualify themselves in other functions, personal relations, or civic duties, or vice-versa. It is a very common tendency for the individual to departmentalize himself with widely differing standards of performance in different fields, and it is not surprising that this should be so when it is considered what effort is required to excel at anything. Conscious cultivation of the instrument must be one of the main planks of a humanist religion, alongside and fully as important as concern for social conditions which provide the environment of life.

M. L. BURNET

THE BREADTH OF A LINE

IT is doubtful whether human beings would find anything in life which would elate them for long if they had not a faculty for minute discriminations. The liking for one kind of cheese or tea rather than another may not be specifically human, for the cat haughtily discriminates between fresh and dried milk; but directly you get the slight difference translated into that which can only find its appreciation in the mind, then one is in the human realm where consciousness can enjoy or make itself miserable during the greater part of the twenty-four hours a day.

When the amount of difference between dried and fresh milk is translated into differences in what can be seen or heard, one has something quite subtle: there is delight or no delight because the proportions of a building are this way or the other, because the tone of a voice was cross or friendly. The discriminating faculty opens up a land of infinite gradations of meaning in which everyone is blind and deaf to a great deal, but in which everyone has some few delicately balanced appreciations.

The phrase *the breadth of a line* used as a symbol is perhaps clearer to the draughtsman than to anyone else and only without need of explanation to him. A good drawing could equally well be a poor drawing within the breadth of a line. This can be revealed by tracing a drawing. However carefully the line follows the original, any eye trained in appreciation of drawing will see that the traced line is dead. Other things which elate the human mind are as subtle as this.

Of course there can be self-conscious insistence on the very little which can lead to preciousness and pedantry and hair-splitting. In them there is a forgetfulness of proportion, the making of a fuss about a very little when it doesn't so very much matter: an unnecessary exhibition of sensitiveness, a narrowness of taste and a lack of generosity and spontaneity. Something is being overdone and the larger issues overlooked.

When the little honestly means much to people, then, the more they manage to secure that little the more hope there is of their having a satisfactory life. Say this little is concerned with the quality of a feeling between two people or a taste in the arts or quite a minor detail such as having the exact tool which one likes for a job, in securing this little, lives are made richer than by material wealth. The little makes its maximum effect when it tips the balance towards a consciousness of the meanings which living can have for human beings. How thin can be the dividing line between the mental states of meaninglessness with apathy, and meaning

with responsiveness. A line can divide as effectively as a chain of mountains or a colossal ocean. As, for example, in the bombing of the war: a terrific explosion, noise, dust, shaking, then devastation, broken masonry, broken bodies, disorder and all the different colours and textures reduced to a uniform grey filth up to a certain line, beyond which everything was normal: the cat drank its milk, the piano was being strummed, people were laughing and eating, normality reigning within a hair's breadth of destruction.

It is rather consoling when in a low state of mind caused by illness or misery to recognize that there is here also no more than the breadth of a line between this and one's normal state. The dejection at having lost all sense of elation connected with the things one previously cared for can be mitigated by consciously shifting one's thoughts. It needs an effort, but such a small one, to look over what one hitherto was most interested in and lived for and to ask oneself whether one still cares for this or not; the mere self-question being in itself an inclination of the mind and enough to make things previously cared for raise their heads and give an intimation that one is not dead to what seemed before to matter most; which brings with it a slight, even if the slightest, elevation, a promise to the person in dejection that he will rise again.

Then how slight also is the delicate edge between the significant and the meaningless in a work of art, the artist taking a risk with his whole life, giving time and energy to produce work which while he works on it always hangs in the balance between coming off and not coming off. The beginner at his art lives off faith roused by the little he can already accomplish; later if this work does come to something he must remain unsure whether that quality which he so highly values has a universal value. He knows there is no sure critic to refer to for valuation.

It is not only the artist who is so affected by the fact that subtleties hold that part of value which is most valuable; there is no one not so affected. Imponderable little things added together make a satisfactory life or the reverse. Perhaps above all one is convinced that the little matters very much because any man who has a spirit of a kind which is not to be satisfied by bread alone finds his greatest satisfactions in things which defy analysis.

If one says that man does not live by bread alone one needs to ask what living by this incalculable other is. "Living by" would seem to mean to be sustained by, and often carries the implication that when not so sustained one is sinking below the level of really being alive in any way that is worth much. Good health can bring high spirits enough to carry some people through their lives on

a level where the meaning of existence is not brought into question, and there is an animal pleasure in being alive which makes it a self-justifying good. Most people, even if they are lucky enough to possess good health, sink below this level when they suffer ill fortune unless they are rescued by the sustaining qualities of that which is not bread.

It may be true to say that when people have conviction that there is something in life which is worth a great deal they feel in themselves either some slight degree of undefined elation or the conscious appreciation of something, or of many things, which have value to them personally. A spirit may rise because of things as different as a poem, a flower, a philosophy, or a walk by the sea; or equally by a child's smile or being in love, or by an idea or an interest. Endless are the particular things which can be sustaining to a particular person; some of them light his mind for a lifetime, others burn out in a day: he experiences life as that which he likes or dislikes, being aware of worth or worthlessness, according to the intensity of that which sustains him.

When people have that which is so unsubstantial yet so precious they are aware that its value is personal to themselves and largely inexpressible, that it is their own in virtue of their being what they are, and of its being no good trying to communicate it unless to some intimate friend who being of sufficiently the same tastes could share it. This may be least the case when it is one of the more impersonal kinds of elation deriving from religion or philosophy.

The religions and philosophies have expressed, and succeeded in making communicable, lasting ways of sustaining a person so that he can more or less cheerfully bear his life through even the worst vicissitudes. So that it is natural that people who have profited by them should have often thought that the most important thing to do to help others was to teach them the way to live which they themselves had found satisfactory and that this was far more important than material social improvements.

For the Christian it is logical that the saving of souls should be put before any material assistance, and for him the spiritual and material, although they may act upon each other, are separate, whereas to the humanist the two belong together and are truly inseparable; the spiritual flowering from the successful interaction of an infinite number of material factors.

A boy lives in a dirty city back street in basement rooms with his father and mother. The parents do not bother about the boy and he spends most of his spare time playing and idling in the street. The hours at school were the best he had known, but he left at fourteen and went into some badly paid job of drudgery.

The dull job, the squalid home, the ugly street are the boy's world. He gets the idea that he would begin to enjoy life if he had a motor bicycle. He starts on some petty thieving to get the money to buy it. He becomes another of the young delinquents who come from bad homes.

There is a minimum experience of goodness necessary before anyone would choose goodness. People need to have good experiences before they can make use of good ideas.

It is much more possible for an untaught person to come in contact with experiences of real value living and working on the land in some primitive place than it is for a modern city dweller. It is possible for a man without any education to know what it means to be interested in the natural world in which he finds himself, to know what it means to do a job well, and what it means to love and be loved. This is so richly enough and so desirable that jaded civilized people have always wished to go back to a simple savage state where love for people and for nature and interest in doing jobs well was enough to make a complete and truly human life. But civilization offers many good things to people beside the trinity of love and work and nature, and the uninstructed person who, if his heart and head are sound, may find his way to live rightly among these three will not find his way unaided when civilization offers him philosophies, politics, arts, and scientific interests, in both good and bad varieties, along with a glut of worthless distractions.

Among these the uninstructed person does not show whether he has any responsiveness because the best of what he might enjoy is as far removed as if it were hidden behind a brick wall. No one gets anything out of the good things which are of the kind that need some knowledge before they mean anything unless he has had some introduction to the idea that there is something in them to reward his pursuit. People often pick up this feeling if they have lived where the discernments of culture are as ordinary as knowing how to eat, or if they have had a very good education. People are not sure to make use of this introduction which opportunity gives them; but without the chance of it they are as cut off from a whole human life as are the isolated savages cut off from Christianity where there is no missionary.

Some of the lives of ordinary people, not excluding the so-called educated ones, remind one that there are very few things which really count for much in the average life. The two which seem to predominate are love and work, which, when they go well, do support people's lives; but when they do not go well cause the loss of most of their contentment in living. Outside the spheres of per-

sonal relationships and work very much time is taken up with what it is not possible to care for more than superficially: domestic trifles and the amusements which other people in the same society pursue.

It is for humanists to search out ways of extending every man's capacity to distinguish among values. For it is the humanist more than anyone who has proved for himself that, when he has known enough of that which has lasting worth, he has become elated and sustained by it, and been able to direct his life by convictions arrived at through experiencing the value of many particular things.

If it be said that the finest experiences open to the uneducated person are through work and love and love of nature, most Christians would add a fourth and affirm that religion was also open to him. The humanist must qualify this, adding that only a religion taken on unreasoning faith and held upon the authority of others is open to the uneducated. Religion, when it is a religion which could be held by reason as well as faith, is no more open to the uneducated person than is philosophy or the arts or the sciences. Therefore as people no longer lead a simple life there is great need of a good education. Education for everyone is yet young. What can be expected from less than a hundred years of general education? At first it was almost a miracle to make all men read and write; then it became exciting to possess some general factual knowledge, and it was found that the passing of examinations brought good jobs and high pay, so that it is not surprising that the popular idea of the use of education was too much connected with job getting and money making aims; and learning in order to make something of living was forgotten.

The humanist wants the whole length of the line of human interests to be accessible to people, and this cannot be done unless the worth of these things is felt. Mostly people are aware of the worth of things in the most casual way, determined by their own fortunes. If they are Christians they may be principally aware of those values which the Christian teaching stresses. Humanism would have them aware of all the values for human living over the widest range.

Everyone giving thought to the matter sees how hopeless the first casual way is. The Christian is sure to say that the way out of it is through a revival of Christianity; he divides the material and spiritual in a way peculiar to himself; he sees people bogged in material issues if they do not accept his especial other-worldly view. The humanist finds no need to turn away from the material world in order to experience the spiritual, but underlines the need for a shift in the person's way of responding to it.

All subjects should be taught in such a way that considerations of values relative to human living should be linked with considerations of facts. Unless this is done the greater number of people will remain as they have always been, only aware of the worth of those things which good fortune gives them experience of and quite unable to go out and make anything of the greater part of the riches of the world which in no wise thrust themselves upon everyone's consciousness. The average person, unaided and untaught, cannot possibly know enough of those things which are enduringly valuable and the apprehension of which gives meaning to the desire to live and offers a guide which, if followed, incites the person to use his life to make these values recurrent and increasing. If he does have experience of some of the eternal worth of what it is open to human consciousness to know, he may do for himself that which no one can do for another: adjust himself towards it with an inclination of feeling so slightly different from that which he previously knew, no further removed from it than the breadth of a line, yet giving a quality to his response to being alive that does a great deal towards transforming everything.

URSULA EDGCUMBE

MARXISM, PAST AND PRESENT

BECAUSE Marxism is the dominant form of scientific humanism in the world to-day, humanists ought to go to some trouble in making up their minds about it; and because of its claims and its position in the world to reject it for any but the strongest reasons would be frivolous. It is no time for refining on differences. Marxists claim that they represent the historical human cause, and reckon against them all who are not wholly with them. Heresy and schism may reasonably be felt to be even more damnable on historical issues of collective human fate than once they were felt to be on questions of the eternal welfare of the individual soul. Therefore there is every reason for seriously examining again and again the Marxist case, and it needs no apology. Or rather, because of the patronising appreciation of elements of Marxism by academics and intellectuals who do not take seriously its central tenet of the unity of thought and action, an apology is due to Marxists from anyone who undertakes to make a critical examination of it. I will say at the outset therefore that I do appreciate and take as seriously as possible the tremendous issues upon which it is staked.

Marxism claims to be scientific socialism. Its sources are in German philosophy, British political economy, and French socialism, the three chief ideological currents of the 19th century which it claims to have continued and completed and to have applied in a way that is not only a scientific technique for realizing historical socialism and liberating the productive energies of industrial society developed by capitalism, but also a scientific interpretation of human nature and destiny. No question of human importance is left out. It is a philosophy of nature and of history informing a programme of revolutionary action fulfilling the destiny of man.

II

The philosophy of nature can be shortly dealt with. It is a form of materialism, the view that nature is primary and given, and mind is a product of natural process and wholly dependent upon material organization. Marxists of course are not mechanistic materialists but biological and historical materialists, and take a dialectical view of natural process: the view that the infinite complexity and vitality of motion issues in transformations, emergent novelties, the interpenetration and union of opposites, which make over a long enough period a discernible progress; the progress is chequered, long intervals of gradually accumulated change,

sudden transformations, "mutations," set-backs; but the immanent laws of motion imply a necessary development, which has characteristic features, providing clues to detailed study. Such a view of mind and nature is one of the more probable alternatives. For instance, Professor Broad in his *The Mind and its Place in Nature* lists seventeen alternatives as the exhaustive set of possibilities, and an emergent materialism is one of the theories which, he argues, have the greatest probability. There is very good reason for holding the doctrine of dialectical materialism, but there is no philosophical reason for supposing that it destroys the plausibility, and finally disposes, of every alternative. And there is no reason for supposing that it disposes of the epistemological problem in philosophy. Nevertheless, Marxists do assume that dialectical materialism disposes once for all of the epistemological question, and indeed brings to an end for all time all metaphysical philosophy and all religion. Any form of theism, of idealism, of agnosticism, of positivism or pure empiricism is put out of court for Marxists. Thinkers who expound these views are very severely dealt with in polemics written by Marxists for Marxists. Marx says somewhere that any polemics worthy of the name should be both brutal and subtle. These polemics fail in only one of these qualifications. However, two things may be said in extenuation of this failure: (1) the doubts about our knowledge which arise from reflections upon its foundation in systematized sense impressions cannot be resolved by appeals to positive science and to practice (as the Marxists claim), because it is reflection upon the pre-suppositions of science which raises the question. One can blithely drive in double harness a theoretical scepticism coupled with animal faith, like Hume or Santayana; or one can refine on this by combining agnosticism with rigorous analysis of the synthesized and systematized content of sense presentations, like Kant or present-day logical positivists or phenomenologists. But such intellectual austerity is congenial or tolerable to few and there always remains the bold alternative of overriding the question in the grand manner by treating the world as an object of experience of the same kind as the experiencing mind, like Plato, or Hegel, or Christian theists, or by treating it as an object of labour, material for use and transformation, like Marxists and Pragmatists. Such philosophies do not answer the question, but they solve it in the only way in which it is capable of being solved, by making assumptions on which it does not arise, or which give it no importance at all. Who says that the assumption of Marxists is not the most plausible of all such assumptions? Johnson's refutation of Berkeley must always be contemptible to philosophers and welcome to common sense; and

in the end there is no other kind of refutation. (2) Why, then, don't Marxists in their philosophical polemics dispose summarily of the epistemological problem on the dogmatic ground that knowledge is practice and successful practice is its own criterion, instead of engaging in protracted attempts in detail to refute the irrefutable? It is one thing openly to override the question, quite another to pretend that you are answering it. Lenin in his *Materialism and Empirio-criticism* and more recently Maurice Cornforth in his *Science versus Idealism* (which characteristically puts the futility of the argument into the title) bring no new considerations to bear on the subtle questions which are dealt with in the works which they criticize. What they have to say about science is perfectly well known to the philosophers against whom they write, and has nothing to do with the case. Theoretically, Marxism is much more effective when it is content with its true philosophical position, overriding the epistemological question—although scattered in the writings of Engels there are perhaps hints of a genuine epistemology. But for practical reasons Marxists cannot be content with that: it is necessary for them to discredit and rout every form of agnosticism in philosophy, not because it is incompatible with materialism but because it is compatible with idealism and theism; it offers a foothold to the enemy; it threatens to breach the monolith solidarity of materialist philosophy which is the ground of all Marxist theory and practice. It leaves questions open; it keeps open contacts and continuity with other traditions; whereas Marxism shows from the outset its tendency to break abruptly with the past (in spite of its historicism), to bring peremptorily to an end not only religion and philosophy but also in a little time politics and all that belongs to the preliminary phases of history before the fully conscious self-direction of humanity is achieved. Therefore the epistemologists have to be shown to be beaten on their own ground in a sham fight. Although this must be either ignorance or obscurantism, it is understandable. Nobody who wishes to see a justifiable and fruitful view of the world establish itself and gain ground can reasonably complain of the more or less arbitrary treatment of fissile individualists and cavillers. Deplore as one may the philosophical ineptitude of Marxist polemics in this field, one should also recognize that if they had been conducted with strict philosophical propriety, penetrating insight, and brilliant exposition, on the legitimate ground of a justifiable alternative treatment of knowledge, they would, however convincing, have left open in principle the possible choice of a different alternative, and thus have failed to seal the past and open a new epoch, have not changed anything.

When all this has been said both in extenuation and in criticism of Marxist philosophical polemics, it must be repeated that there is much, perhaps everything, to be said for Marxist philosophy, dialectical materialism, as such. Its shift of emphasis from substance to process, being to becoming, essence to existence, universality to historicity; its abandonment of a block universe for a universe pursuing its adventures, its attention to the many sidedness of phenomena, the multiple context and reciprocal interaction of causal agents, its decisive use of the test of practice for the elimination of verbal pseudo-problems: all this and more has been abundantly confirmed and used in subsequent developments in philosophy. These hints and ideas which were thrown out by Marx and Engels in the course of their preoccupation with other studies have proved sufficiently precise and fruitful to make them rather than Bergson, or old Hegel from whom they learned so much, the watershed which divides the old from the new in philosophy.

III

If dialectical materialism is the spine of Marxism, the limbs by which it moves and takes hold of human life and destiny are the materialist conception of history and the revolutionary strategy and tactics for the present epoch which spring from it. The materialism of Hobbes and of the French writers is a metaphysical materialism. Mind is strictly determined by material events and in theory can be causally explained by reference to such events. But psychologically mind is influenced by pleasure and pain, and in history mind is influenced socially by the issue of laws with annexed penalties, and to a more limited extent by rewards. The business of philosophy is to show the source, authority, and utility of the laws, and the principles which should inform them. It is in this way that human life is rationalized, brought under conscious control and to the perfection of which it is capable. Marxism is not an abstract materialism of this kind; it is historical, and begins with detailed study of the concrete material conditions of life in a given society, the way in which the members of the society get a living and the social organization and cultural content which belong to the mode of production. The factors in this complex influence one another reciprocally, but the *ultimate* causal factors and the essential objects of study are the material conditions of production and the changes which are accumulating there. The philosophic mind can act causally upon history, influencing the making of the laws and obedience to them, but it is a local and limited operation idealizing an existing system of social relations.

Material changes accumulating in the economic substratum of that society will eventually do away with both legal and philosophical systems. The attempt of mind to control human life directly even by the scientific application of philosophically conceived laws to universal motives, is not really scientific because it is not studying and operating with the factors which have ultimate causal efficacy. In the economic sequence of events there is a necessity which *ultimately* always asserts itself. Therefore philosophers who look for the universal grounds of a permanent human order and try to use their prescriptions to produce it can never succeed. Hobbes and Bentham (or Machiavelli) may come closer to the psychological and social facts than Plato, and to that extent have greater practical influence, but their method is still metaphysical, for they take the given facts as permanent and ignore the dynamic process which determines history and will change them; and thus their philosophy does not bring man to an understanding of history, still less to the control of it, but merely to the view of an abstract possibility, or, at best, to the idealization of an existing order. If one wishes to understand and to change the world one must study in detail the historical causes in operation, and these are never primarily ideas, nor are they facts which can be generalized as universal truths about human nature and human society.

This might be exemplified by asking what Marx would have to say about our modern preoccupation with the problem of reconciling the claims of the individual person with the claims of the state: how is the relation between the two to be conceived philosophically as a norm for social policy? I think he would say that this is a vain search for a formula, a formula, whatever it might prove to be, which could enlighten nobody and effect nothing, except to advance the discoverer in his own esteem and deceive the public. Instead of this literary phrase-making, he would say, look at the social relations and conditions which you actually have and you will see such and such persons enjoying such and such liberties and such and such persons enduring such and such privations. This specification of liberty is a property of this organization of society based on this method of economic production. It is quite unalterable by talking about it and changing our ideas. But political, moral, and ideological changes are in process (of which our talk may be a symptom) as a result of earlier economic change, and the transformation of society which is impending will inevitably mean a new specification of liberty, not determined by our ideas but by the new social relations for economic production. No formula or philosophical prescription can determine the conditions or content of freedom in a society. The conditions and the content

are historically given; the changes which are transforming conditions and content are also historically given: we can choose between phrase-making and serious participation in history.

Marx and Engels are all the time making ethical judgments, are all the time concerned with the immeasurable, elaborated degradation of man by the exploitation of labour; their total vision of history is the most serious call to a devoted life imaginable: yet all the time they contemptuously reject and spit upon ethical ideals, "the modern mythology with its goddesses of Justice, Freedom, Equality, and Fraternity." Such ideals have no independent status, no power and no content of their own; their content is determined by the economic facts and their derivatives. In the socialist society there will inevitably be liberty and justice and love, and their content will compare very favourably with their counterparts in the capitalist state. It is a distraction to think in terms of these ideals because they have no absolute content and no causal efficacy. The expansion of productivity does not merely make an expansion of justice and liberty possible, it makes it necessary; but what makes it necessary is the militant action of those who alone can use the productive capacity that has been developed. In the end these ethical concepts will lose their meaning and disappear from consciousness because the conditions which determined their appearance will have been superseded: this is the historical absolute of ethical concepts, when they dissolve in the facts.

Similarly, in spite of abusive language all the time about exploiters, oppressors, robbers, predatory imperialists, and so on (and fierce partisanship for proletarian heroes out of due time like Spartacus), Marx never regards dominant classes and persons in general as opportunists who by a bid for power, a sheer act of will, have established themselves and their interests: they are always necessary agents of a necessary system. When they are displaced in due course by new men, it is solely because the new men have a new competence (in terms of techniques or interests, or both): the old are superseded not primarily as oppressive but as inefficient; the new order is not merely a turn of the wheel in the fortunes of parties, but an historical achievement for humanity. This is different from the older socialist conception of class struggle, as the simple conflict between haves and have-nots exemplified in any slice of history. Marxism certainly includes this simple truth on the psychological side, but translates it from the plane of mere wishes and dreams, and fantasies of will, to the practical level of actual conditions studied in detail, the economic possibilities and pressures, the emergent novelties, the transformation of

interests in their content and basis; it is a shift from the subjective to the objective, from human nature to human history, from effects to causes, from ideals to understanding and power; and in place of unending conflicts and meaningless oscillations it puts dialectical process and progressive achievement. How far does this challenging conception of history hold good; in particular, how far does Marx make it good in his own detailed analysis of the capitalist system?

IV

There are six main lines of emphasis having a practical bearing which distinguish Marx's description and analysis of capitalist economics from the classical English political economy.

(1) He insists that *laissez-faire* capitalism is a temporary historical form of production, neither natural, in the sense of founded on natural laws discoverable in the nature of men and the nature of things, nor final, in the sense of ideal. Adam Smith had assumed two systems of economy, the mercantile system and the agricultural system, both of them mistaken political policies; and he had argued that when these were taken away, "the obvious and simple system of natural liberty establishes itself of its own accord": productivity is maximized and is self-regulating. Marx regarded this liberation as a necessary phase in the expansion of capitalism, not as a discovery of the principles of economics.

(2) There is a significantly different emphasis in Marx's descriptive economics. Earlier economists had assumed that the various forms of dealing were as useful and necessary as production itself. Commerce was, so to speak, the vascular system, as productive industry might be the muscular system, and transport and administration the nervous system, in the whole economy. Marx elaborates the distinction between selling a commodity for money in order to buy and use another commodity needed or desired, and buying a commodity not for its use-value but for its exchange-value, in order to pocket a margin of profit. It is not an odd transaction of this kind to which he draws attention, nor the indefinite multiplication of odd transactions in a whole society, but the exploitation of differential exchange-values as a conscious persistent activity, unlimited and insatiable. Hume had regarded this type of activity as of enormous use in stimulating consumption and production and bringing about cheap goods and cheap money. Marx is not unmindful of its necessary part in the genesis of capitalism, but is thinking also of its distortion and destruction of "normal" exchange for use—to be paralleled by production for profit instead of for use. The elaboration of this distinction is an anticipation of his distinction between the use-value and the exchange-value of

labour as a marketable commodity, which is the master-key that opens capitalism to theoretic understanding and effects its exposure to the masses.

(3) Engels after Marx's death compared Marx's theory of surplus value as a liberating force with Darwin's theory of evolution. In the Marxist view it is the secret of capitalism, the hidden dynamic of capitalist exploitation and expansion. Capitalism poses as freedom, "the obvious and simple system of natural liberty." It is built on free contract, and therefore presupposes free men: on the one hand, men free to employ their capital in economic enterprise as they wish, free from medieval monopolies, regulations, and restraint of trade; on the other, men free to offer their labour, not slaves and not serfs, men emancipated from relations of status and free to enter into relations of contract. But capitalism also presupposes that the men who offer their labour are compelled to enter into a necessitous bargain and take what they are given; for they are in competition with one another and have no other means of living, having been expropriated as peasants or as artisans and left with only their labour to sell: for the creation of a proletariat, a protracted and exceedingly harsh expropriation of the masses, is a necessary condition of capitalism. The exchange-value of their labour under certain conditions, approximates to the minimum necessary for the subsistence of themselves and their families; and the employment of women and children tends to reduce the *total* family income to subsistence level. But the use-value of their labour hired by the capitalist is worth more, at first far more, than the equivalent of its exchange-value. This surplus value, "unpaid labour," is appropriated by the capitalist, and it is this lust for the appropriation of surplus value that gives the enormous incentive to capitalist enterprise. In the pages of Marx as nowhere else one feels the struggle for the opportunity to create and appropriate surplus value, the fever, force, and pace of a gigantic, prodigal, protean expansion. The workers, then, having been expropriated are exploited, in the sense that the exchange-value of their labour is well below the exchange-value of its products which remains in the hands of their employers.

This theory of surplus value has been hotly contested, and is generally regarded by non-Marxists as an exploded fallacy, a myth. Certainly the classical economists did not recognise exploitation as inherent in the mere employment of labour in production for profit. Adam Smith, particularly, recognizes and describes many forms and cases of exploitation, mainly through the natural advantages of employers as a class, or through the monopoly of a market. But

a free market economy is supposed to minimize exploitation, not to exemplify it on an unprecedented scale. However this may be, Marx's theory, apart from its importance in the history of class agitation, is worked out with subtlety and power and enables him to predict and explain phenomena to which the orthodox school remained blind.

(4) The surplus value is not appropriated until the commodities produced by the realization of the use-value of the labour employed are exchanged in the market at the value equivalent to the socially necessary labour-time that has gone into their production: then the surplus value is roughly the proportion of commodities produced by unpaid labour. Since by the necessity of the system there are more commodities produced than labour can buy with the wages paid, there is periodical crisis and stagnation. At the same time the development of new forms of capital expansion is stimulated. The increase of scale and pace produces more catastrophic dislocations, unutilized capital on the one hand and unutilized labour on the other, with nothing to bring them together, since because of the fundamental contradiction of the system it does not pay: there is poverty in plenty.

(5) This situation is temporarily improved by finding overseas markets and fields of investment, which in the sequel involves imperial adventures, the enlargement of monopolies and cartels, wars. These overseas commitments and adventures are not extras, in the sense that home needs have been satisfied and home resources fully utilized, a world market for surplus capital and surplus commodities. The reverse is the case. The satisfaction of basic needs at home and the reduction of socially necessary labour-time in production are neglected because they are unprofitable or less profitable. The system creates impersonal, irrational world forces, hard to understand, impossible to control, of which ultimately all are victims, but by which meanwhile some few profit extremely.

(6) Believing that human nature and behaviour are determined by the material conditions of living, Marx and Engels were bound to study the human effects of capitalist conditions. They noted: the destruction of the common interest which had sustained and regulated earlier small more or less self-sufficient communities satisfying their needs by production and exchange in a local market; the separation of hand and brain, enjoyment and work, production and consumption, by the extreme division of labour; the reduction of the worker to an appendage of a machine; the destruction of the home by the pressures and opportunities provided by the employment of women and children; the separation of town and country; the depersonalization of relations which turned personal

worth into exchange-value; the transformation of personal powers and moral responsibility into blind world forces. The sum of effects, in their view, added up to a degradation of human life at all levels, historically produced and unintended, but calling for remedy—and providing one.

This view of the capitalist economic system as a temporary historical form of production, driven into prodigal expansion of productive capacity by the opportunity to create and appropriate surplus value, but at the same time crippled by the contradiction which prevented it from delivering the goods to the homes of want and from fully utilizing the productive resources it multiplied; developing monopoly, imperialism, and increasingly catastrophic dislocations; creating a mass proletariat whose exploitation, frustration, and degradation are necessary conditions of the system: this view is strikingly different from the classical view. It is not less true, nor does it displace the classical view: it is the other side of the picture, more revealing of some things, truer for some purposes and in some respects. Neither view is the true view, neither is merely the distorted view of class interest, although both have been adopted and developed by opposed class interests. Marx's view is both more distorted (because of a certain primitivist bias) and richer in insights (because of his concrete historical thinking). Subsequent history has demonstrated largely, although not yet conclusively, the truth and error of each. Both views are historical, and neither is applicable directly to the system as it stands to-day, but there are always people who prefer the quaintness of the past.

Academic economists, many of them exceptionally humane men, remained remarkably complacent about the system. They assumed that capital and labour must be fully utilized: Marx tried to show that they could not be. They assumed that adjustments, more or less delayed, more or less harsh, would always put things as right as they could be put; the system was self-regulating: Marx tried to show that things would get worse and induce remedies ultimately more disastrous; the system was self-contradictory. It was not until the chronic large-scale unemployment of the 1930's that economists were jolted out of their long-term complacency and re-examined their assumptions about the full utilization of resources (full employment) as distinct from the rational allocation of resources (assumed to be the real argument for socialism). Lord Keynes in his book *The General Theory of Employment Interest and Money*, published in 1936, addressed to fellow economists although subsidized to make it widely influential, argues that orthodox economic theory is the theory of a special case (like Newton's physical theory) and that a general theory is necessary to

understand the facts of the economic order as we find it. His general theory takes account of the intricate relations of the variable factors involved and gives the picture of an economic system recognizably like our own and considerably different from the model described in the classical theory. He gives an honourable prominence to heretical theories of under-consumption which had persisted ignored in the underworld of economic theory. Marx is mentioned in this connexion. In another connexion Marx is mentioned with a dislike that suggests fear. Undoubtedly, justice is not done to Marx's view in this revision of orthodox theory. Undoubtedly, on the other hand, Marx does not supply or anticipate the general theory which Keynes sets out to provide. Economics is an extremely intricate and problematical science. Marx made himself technically competent to deal with it in his own way and brought to it an historical vision which shattered its prescribed limits. Although he is dealing with the same facts and using orthodox theory and correcting it, one must say that his theory is different in kind and stands for an independent alternative development. It takes more than economic theory to produce from capitalism a managed economy in a social service state, with the main drives and incentives unimpaired; and it takes more than economic theory to turn a capitalist economy into direct planned community production for community consumption, with outright prohibition of all dealing and all employment of labour for private profit: but there is more of economic theory in the first and more of revolutionary will in the second. Theoretically the two are alternative solutions of the same problems. But that does not mean that in practice they are historically offered as alternatives.

Marx assumed that the capitalist system was a necessary phase, and a real advance, in the development of the productive power of society. There could be no question of looking for something else. On the other hand, it could not go on in the hands of the capitalists who had developed it, because their interests were unalterably opposed to its full use and to the distribution of its products according to need or according to work. In their hands the system worked blindly and violently, producing large-scale catastrophic, and unintended, consequences. It had to be understood and brought under control. Fortunately, the necessary social transformation, the transition to socialism, had already been prepared (as always) by history in the womb of the capitalist system itself, and would prove as easy as inevitable. By contrast with the protracted and frightful expropriation of the masses of individuals which had established the conditions of capitalism and brought into existence the proletariat, the expropriation of the few capitalists by the

politically awakened class-conscious proletariat would be both quick and painless.

The transformation of scattered private property, arising from individual labour, into capitalist private property is, naturally, a process incomparably more protracted, violent, and difficult, than the transformation of capitalistic private property, already practically resting on socialised production, into socialised property. In the former case, we had the expropriation of the mass of the people by a few usurpers; in the latter, we have the expropriation of a few usurpers by the mass of the people. (*Capital*, Vol. I, Ch. XXXII.)

In the established socialist societies, the evils of capitalism can be remedied and its benefits fully appropriated: productive capacity will be directly expanded and applied to the reduction of socially necessary labour-time; common interest will be re-established and the sources and occasions of conflict reduced and eliminated; freedom will be realized in the sense of exploitation banished, purpose made practicable, destiny understood and fulfilled; the disrupted family will be reinstated, and reinforced by the economic independence of its members; hand and brain, enjoyment and work, production and consumption, town and country, action and responsibility, will be re-united. What is best and permanent in human life will be restored, and at a higher level of integration with multiplied powers and a richer content. It was a grand vision; and none has been so near the truth.

V

To separate the revolutionary strategy and tactics from dialectical historical materialism and the analysis of capitalism is more than an emasculation of Marxism; it is its dismemberment. The world is to be understood in order to change it; and it is to be changed, not in order to bring it nearer to human wishes, aspirations, and ideals, which are subjective and conditioned, determined by the changing facts; the way in which it is to be changed is given in the disclosed development of history, which has taken shape unforeseen and unintended, but which nevertheless is an advance, or preliminary to advance, because dialectical process ensures a progressive development. This view does not necessarily imply a teleology. Self-development, self-correction and completion may be a persistent characteristic of things in continuous interaction in the ceaseless movement of nature: and that is the meaning of dialectical materialism—as it is also the essential meaning of Platonic and of Hegelian dialectic in the realm of concepts. History involves men's wills which are supposedly free, but they are blind in respect

of the further, unintended consequences of choice, pursuit, and action, and they are blind in respect of the deeper causes by which they are determined. On both these aspects of their position they may get enlightenment. What happens is predetermined and predictable, not because it is purposed by man or god, but because the nature of the interacting entities and their conditions are determinate and relatively stable and may be known. Men with a knowledge of historical precedents, a grasp of dialectical process, and an analysis of the current factors at work, may learn to foresee what will happen. At worst, it will happen blindly and raggedly, with more or less violence, confusion, dislocation, and suffering; at best, consciously, smoothly, quickly, with little pain, and with aesthetic finish and completeness. The difference is the part which falls to human intelligence and will; limited in scope, infinite in importance. The particular content and detailed modification which may be the work of the intelligent will within the limited scope assigned by historical determinism is of the essence of history and humanity. So that communism, without contradiction, may well be both inevitable and a consummate act of will, the most massive and spectacular in history.

The Marxist does not say, I know what I want and how I am going to get it: he says, I know what is going to happen and that it will be good; therefore I know what to do. The first attitude is made rational by recourse to ethics and science; the second, it is claimed, is wholly scientific. I will recapitulate the argument, as the Marxist might put it. We have discovered and proved that the ultimate historical causes are economic factors, which change and cause changes in all the other factors. Detailed study of these changes in their historical circumstances gives a general pattern for understanding and predicting the main form of critical transition in large-scale changes (economic class conflict). We have shown that the present system of capitalist economic production is stultified by the incentive which maintains it (the appropriation of surplus value), for it can only profit by cheating labour, and if it cheats labour it cannot profit. This contradiction is hidden by the complexity of factors, although there are symptoms which show that our diagnosis is right; but in the end, if the system continues, a few can profit at the expense of the many, by creating and maintaining conditions of scarcity. Their power to do this is the power of the State. But ultimate power lies with the many, and when these become conscious of the situation, as they must, the outcome is certain. The social change that then takes place must bring about the end of class conflict because the proletariat have no separate economic interest of their own to fortify and enforce

against others, no preferential relation to the means of production. This radical change of conditions must result in an unprecedented change in the nature of man, since the nature of man is ultimately determined by economic conditions. In general, the problem set by the contradictions of capitalism will be solved, because it is in the nature of problems to be solved (that is the dialectical meaning of history); the general lines of the solution can be discerned, and therefore intelligent action can be taken to facilitate and expedite the solution. Put bluntly and concretely: the dictatorship of the proletariat is certain, predetermined by the logic of the situation; what follows afterwards (the content of the new society) is an inference from that, not an ideal object of will.

Is this argument scientific in form? Is it true? In history there can be no question of a repeated recurrence of a simple sequence of events (the basic presupposition of science). Marxists generalize from one or two (mainly one) large-scale transformations of society, and apply the generalization to a prediction of a similar transformation to come in a situation which in many or most characteristics is extremely dissimilar. For example, the rising bourgeois class which displaced the feudal ruling class had a technical competence for developing the new economic order which has no parallel in the proletariat. The Marxist theory of the state (the state exists for violence, as the instrument of the dominant economic interest), and the Marxist theory of the necessary limits of capitalist production for profit (the inherent contradiction) and the necessary form of its development determined by those limits, are theories which usefully describe general tendencies which may be more or less perfectly realized in particular cases, but they are not fixed properties or attributes of stable entities, and to use them independently for predictions of necessity in situations in which the factors involved are complex and subtle is to assume that they are. (This is a return to the Aristotelian metaphysics and logic of which dialectical materialism is a repudiation.) It may be demonstrably true that the economic factors ultimately assert themselves as the efficient causes, but it has not yet been shown that economic causes directly determine human nature and behaviour, and therefore it is irresponsible speculation to maintain that the dictatorship of the proletariat by abolishing the economic class conflict will appreciably alter human nature and behaviour unless it remains in power a very long time (a whole "historical epoch" according to Lenin and Stalin), during which (by all the precedents) it will follow its own irresistible tendencies. Finally, the general assumption that dialectical process in history is progressive (in so far as it is not merely an empirical reading of history) seems to be either the assumption that mankind

really learns and systematically applies the lessons of historical experience from one generation to another, or the assumption that human consciousness is merely an epiphenomenon and that the material inheritance develops independently by its own immanent laws; otherwise, the idea seems to be either an ideal, demanding that the objective historical process be accompanied by thought and action, that its consecutive phases be truly comprehended and truly lived, or the rather grim consolation that the truth in the end will be learned because nothing else will prove any good, "the instability of evil is the moral order of the world" (Whitehead), or in the words of Croce, an early neo-Hegelian liberal critic of Marxism, "the loss of a truth is often paid for by the human race with tremendous calamities and the truth brought back by unspeakable suffering."

It is easy in this way to make inroads into the orderly structure of Marxist thought and to scatter its scientific pretensions; and this has often been done. However, it remains impressive by its penetration and usefulness; and it is more scientific than easy criticism recognizes: for example, the great differences between the bourgeois revolution and the proletarian revolution (not stressed by Marx but clearly recognised and elaborated by Stalin) are not significant if the operative factor in both cases is economic class interest. It is of course not possible in this complex field to be as precise as in the exact sciences. Unfortunately Marxism does claim to be scientifically exact in this sense, with the result that Marxism contradicts itself and turns into its opposite: dialectical method becomes doctrinaire ideology, materialism becomes idealism, determinism becomes voluntarism, communism becomes fascism. How does this come about?

The strategy and tactics, fully formed by the theory, were given weight and authority by the persistent criticism and opposition offered by Marx and Engels to three prevalent forms of socialist theory and practice. (1) Utopian socialism, appealing to society as a whole and offering a new model of things in strong contrast to what existed: this, of course, had no political future and after the establishment of an independent historic working-class movement was frivolous or perverse, and a dangerous weakness. (2) Ideological socialisms, led by persons or parties who planned to use the political power of the working class for the achievement of some dreamed-of form of society, some ideal: these also were sectarian and religious in character and ministered to personal ambitions and distracted and distorted the political consciousness of the proletariat. (3) So-called opportunists or gradualists who worked empirically to improve the condition of the working class by entering into bargains and getting concessions, building up the class

power of the workers for achievements within the framework of the bourgeois democratic state: these for the sake of immediate, illusory, and enervating gains betrayed the whole future, since they dissipated their power and left the capitalist system intact and the state in the hands of the capitalists. With strict dis-
 severance of these deviations, Marx and Engels followed their historic line: (1) since the mere existence of the capitalist system and the bourgeois state entails necessarily exploitation, oppression, and the restriction of production, nothing less than the destruction of the wage-labour system and of the bureaucratic military machine by the dictatorship of the proletariat can possibly bring about the jump into the new orbit which economic development has now made the destiny of mankind; (2) the existence, the character, and the situation of the proletariat ensure its recognition of its historic mission; it has no interests of its own to enforce and no ideals to realize; it has only to take over, administer, and keep in its hands the economic machine developed by capitalism; what will be achieved in the new society can in general be inferred from the character of proletarian rule, that is, from the character of proletarian class interest; the proletariat does not aim at and carry through the revolution for the sake of justice or liberty or equality, all that can be said is that these and all other attributes of man and of society are advanced a further stage by proletarian rule. (When attacking communists for making the end justify the means, it is well to notice that their peculiarity is that they don't. The means is historically given, and the end is thereby determined; no ideal end is willed. How perverse? But how like the English conception of democracy.)

Now these doctrines have to be scientifically exact to carry the whole weight of human destiny which they are asked to bear. Unfortunately, in the nature of the case, no such doctrines can be universally exact. At best, they can approximate to the situation in some places at some times. And this they do. But unless they are held to be scientifically exact it is not possible to drill and discipline a communist party as an instrument of power. All manner of deviations are possible, because they are not without truth and justification. Marx and Engels for all their strenuous controversial labours did not convince the workers' movements, not even the most "scientific" of them all, of which they were most proud, on which they laboured most assiduously, the great German Social Democratic Party. How infinitely one might wish that they had been successful there! History is dark with accidents. It was Lenin who adopted, adapted, used, reinforced, and gave new authority and prestige to Marxism as an historic instrument of thought and

action. It is Stalin who gives us a subtle vulgarization of dialectical historical materialism, in his essay of 1938 on that subject.

VI

It is a principle of dialectics that action transforms both the object and the agent. Action so considerable as the building up of a militant workers' movement is bound to involve mutual transformation of sectional interests in a society. That is a new situation, materially different, complicated by new factors, calling for fresh exploration. To refuse to recognize change, and impose on the situation an ideological stereotype, is to forego dialectical materialism for idealism. The situation may be rich in new possibilities demanding dialectical study. To prefer the primacy of will to the primacy of dialectical process is to make Marxism nothing else than "an embodied will to power and government," which was Mussolini's definition of fascism. Thus Marxism, which is not a social programme but a philosophy of history, because it insists on making an exact science of dialectical social study, contradicts itself and turns into its opposite: it becomes destructive. One might ask, does it turn into its opposite because it is returning to what it was to begin with; is its philosophy of history a rationalization of given ideas and a given revolutionary will? Its affinity with Pragmatism might confirm the suspicion. That, however, is a biographical inquiry. One may fairly suppose that Marxism like most philosophical tissues is woven of the warp and woof of genuine intellectual inquiry and strong volitions. Anyhow, it gave historical solidity, seriousness, and responsibility to revolution in an age of light-hearted insurrectionism.

The fundamental contradiction between dialectics and ideology which, through its insistence on "science," turns Marxism into its negation turns historical responsibility into irresponsibility. The present rôle of communist parties is not necessarily everywhere mischievous, irresponsible, and destructive. But, especially in highly developed and complex social situations, its intransigence, its refusal to be changed by action, its ideological hardness, its determination at all costs to remain whole and absolute, forces every political question to the ultimate issue of, Who shall kill whom? eliminates all possibilities save the bare disjunction, Either/Or; sets everything upon the utmost exertion of inflexible will for the disposal of absolute power; and this is rank destruction, utterly and wickedly irresponsible. Our civilization is too complex and subtle to gain anything but irreparable damage from such treatment, and there is every excuse for those who take communism not merely

as the enemy but as unmitigated barbarism, indistinguishable from fascism, in its turn attracting the "armed bohemian" and the "armed intellectual," manifesting itself most clearly in the bitterness of its hostility to successful social democracy which gives the lie to its "science," exposes its denial of dialectics, and turns its tempered instrument of power to brittle hollowness.

Examination of the theoretical structure of Marxism shows the flaw in its science, which substitutes a form of idealism for its justifiable materialism, and issues in the negation of its essence. This can be deduced from the theory and is painfully plain in the practice. But Marxism means too much to too many to be left with a formal analysis of the theory and exposure or denunciation of the practice. It attracts not only some of the worst but also some of the best. The absolute ideology joined to the political power of a class-conscious proletariat in the hands of fanatical leaders with ability and drive is a force unexampled in history, and when it is moving in the direction in which our sympathies lie, there is hardly anything to be said that does not swell the temptation to jump on the band-wagon. Theoretically, Marxism is not a social programme, it is a reading of history; the social programme is not prescribed and is not an object of will, it is deducible from the dictatorship of the proletariat on a full reading of the meaning of that dictatorship, and is left to history; just as theoretically the social programme is left to history in a formal democracy. I think it is important to understand Marxism theoretically in this way, or one gets no insight into its inwardness, its authentic self. The theory of the dictatorship of the proletariat is the epitome of Marxism and contains it all, backwards and forwards. Nevertheless, the social programme is there, and is all-important to Marxism as to unsophisticated judgment. What will be achieved in the society initiated by the dictatorship of the proletariat is not arbitrary, it is historical; the advent and nature of the dictatorship is assurance of that. Because it is not arbitrary, it can be precisely deduced; it is historically determined. In sum, it is simply expressed as the application of the economic machine to the production of plenty for the satisfaction of human wants, fully and freely, and the development of personality. This rational self-conscious fulfilment of human destiny is historically possible by the removal of obstructions for which the dictatorship of the proletariat is indispensable. This reasoning raises again the whole question I have been discussing, to which there is no final abstract answer: the appeal must be from dogma to facts, from idealism to materialism. The dictatorship of the proletariat in practice does not solve definitively the political problem and the economic

problem; it transposes them to a different set of conditions, some advantageous, some disadvantageous to a solution. In any case, there is no final solution, once for all. Where the dictatorship of the proletariat has been historically achieved, what is accomplished is of the greatest interest and importance, not as a standard but for comparison. The conception of the end in terms of the means whether by Marxists or by liberal democrats is the essence of both theories. In both cases it has an historical justification and cannot be forthwith abandoned, but it is becoming possible to conceive the future more profitably in direct terms of the content of the social programme, and even to establish objective universal standards. This involves a new way of social thinking, in which Marxism survives in the only way in which a philosophy can survive, by the enduring and progressive part of its activity and the destruction of the *system* which is necessarily transitory and *reactionary*—as Engels says. Like everything else it is mortal and transitory and limited. It has to shriek and surrender its sacred egoism, its absolute otherness and universal claim, and like other influences pass into ever-living history. It has produced honey, but it is not for the hive.

In sum, then, the key concepts of Marxism (capitalism, the State, the revolution and dictatorship of the proletariat) are the products of historical thinking, but they are not used by Marxists as dialectical conceptions of historical existents in development; they are not even used as empirical scientific concepts: they are used absolutely as logical concepts of substances and their necessary attributes; historical characteristics and tendencies of these phenomena are treated as the *propria* of substances, belonging to them by definition without any need to look again. This of course is not dialectical materialism, but reactionary metaphysics. But it is useless to pretend that it might be corrigible intellectual error when manifestly it is implacable will. Marxism in this way shows that it is not true and it is not honest; it is doubly false: intellectually and ethically, objectively and subjectively. It is not Marxism that is condemned, the union of militancy and dialectics; on the contrary, it is Marxism that condemns the Marxists: they are judged by their own doctrine, as lacking the courage and integrity to follow it through, or as using it merely to cover their naked will to power. Marxism does not turn into its own opposite by a necessary development, a dialectical process, nor by a venial or vital inconsistency on the part of Marxists, but by their total though unavowed abandonment of reason and principle. If it is otherwise, the proof will be in a return to the principles of dialectical historical materialism. Meanwhile, Marxists in the main

stand for no interests but their own, and their claim to represent the historical human cause must be decisively rejected as impudent, mischievous, and destructive.

A great headstrong cocktail with a jaw of iron, with no manners and no vice, with tremendous jumping-quarters and plenty of stamina: such a beast would not be very pleasant to ride, but a good horseman would be well carried and might soon leave the field behind; and if after a time in the excitement of the chase he found he was riding a tiger, well, that could not really happen of course, that could only happen in a nightmare. But how like real life!

H. J. BLACKHAM

DESIGN AT WORK

AT the November Burlington House exhibition good (and not so good) designers (the R.D.I.) were showing what they could do for industry. The display was so ingenious, and never too much, that one was surprised at wanting to see all that was there. It is to be regretted that it is now too late to lure a visitor by describing the beauty of Susie Cooper's dinner service.

The exhibition appears to have had the two purposes: one to make the industrialist, who had not given much thought to design, scratch his head and think; and the other of interesting the general public in the growth which takes place between idea and object. It also did a third thing: it celebrated a victory about which it is worth writing a line of rejoicing.

Until this century was well advanced, perhaps until the 1920's, to say that a thing was machine-made was equivalent to saying it was aesthetically inexpressive, and to say that a thing was hand-made implied that it was probably the reverse. This is no longer a foregone conclusion. The machine is no longer the enemy; and man is proud enough to show what he can produce by its means. There is nothing to fear from industrial production other than the insensitiveness of the minds behind it. Exactly the same devil makes itself felt in individually produced works of fine art.

U.E.

UNESCO'S FINE HUMANISM

WHEN the supreme global intellectual organization of our time, Unesco, comes out for a "New Humanism" for our civilization, that's certainly great news of vital interest to all humanists. And this is just what Dr. Pedro Bosch-Gimpera, the head of Unesco's Philosophy and Humanities Section, strongly urged in his article in the May issue of *The Unesco Courier*.

Here monthly in this fine new paper the editor, S. M. Koffler, presents real evidence of Unesco's great worldwide fight to extend the reasoning power of the human mind over social behaviour: Unesco's co-ordination of scientific groups and their vital knowledge services, illiteracy's challenge to film education in Africa, China's mass education, how the compelling beauty of music becomes a weapon for world peace and international understanding, Unesco's aid to war-devastated scientific centres in Europe and Asia, the four emergency regions for fundamental education in our world to-day, the necessity for the popularization of scientific knowledge, society's neglect of inexpensive books as a medium of popular communication of facts and ideas, all this and so much more.

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Authentic information is given on the great United Nations Appeal for Children.

Julian Huxley, as Director General of Unesco, wisely observed of the whole dangerous world situation in our time: "Man cannot exist half illiterate and half literate." How reminiscent of H. G. Wells' celebrated "race between education and catastrophe." Unesco is keenly awake to the social urgency of our age.

A full year's subscription to *The Unesco Courier* is but two shillings and sixpence, from: Unesco House, 19, Avenue Kleber, Paris 16-e, France.

GORDON CAULFEILD

BOOK REVIEWS

STOP LOOKING AND LISTEN. By Chad Walsh. Pp. 119. S.C.M. Press, 6s.

The only reason for treating this book seriously is that it is a sample of what is issued by responsible Christian bodies as propaganda, because (apparently) it is effective propaganda. The book does not give the impression that the author is trying to convey deep experience and reflection simply and accurately, but that he is imparting second-hand thought popularly. The tone is unpleasantly superficial and unconvincing because the author is not setting Christian thought over against the deepest ethical humanist thought, nor is he simply trying to convert the superficially minded worldly people. He calls non-Christian thought "secular optimism," includes under that head every kind of superficiality, and argues as though the only modern alternative were Christianity.

Nearly every argument is fallacious; as, for instance, that the various conceptions of the historical Jesus are incompatible: the one "that pats children on the head"; the one that will "stand no nonsense from those whose whole lives violate the moral law"; the one who wanted to establish the kingdom of heaven on earth; and the one who led a life of communion with God. If Jesus were only a man he must have had a badly split personality, but if he were God these aspects of his personality become reconcilable. Is it possible the author has neither known nor heard of a human being who was tender with little children, but burned with wrath against those who worked them to death in factories; and who, keeping both tenderness and condemnation, sought to reform the system which made the exploitation of little children possible, if not inevitable? And could such a man have no inner life of meditation, dedication, vision and conviction?

There follow indefensible assumptions: for example, that humanists die in pagan serenity because they have paid their taxes and have only to behave with a minimum of civic virtue. Surely the noblest Christian conscience should be set over against the noblest secular conscience. Only so can it be shown that Christianity quickens the conscience as no other view of life can do. It is then suggested that only Christianity will give a vision of life which will prevent a man from leaving his mistress because she once fails to use a de-odorant under her arms, or a wife from leaving her husband because he refuses to learn Marie Stopes by heart. Is it possible the author does not know that love and loyalty and shared responsibility for a lasting relationship can be recognized

as good by humanists, and that purely sensuous and romantic enjoyment can be seen as an unworthy basis of a human relationship? But his flippancy is double-edged. If he recognized that many women who do not believe in God endure lifelong frustration of their deep emotional cravings and yet care for their husbands and lovingly bring up their children, care for their neighbours, think clearly and grow in humanity, then he would have to present Christianity in majestic proportions. As it is, this book makes Christianity—or at least this Christian—seem as superficial as “secular optimism” or some secular people. Whilst reading it I was glad I had just seen the film “M. Vincent,” which reveals with artistic genius the overwhelming spiritual integrity, the chastening glory, of the Saint of Charity. It reveals his kinship with all who have loved and suffered with the disinherited, all who have confronted callousness with charity. And yet it made one feel the unique quality of the person who believes God sent his son to die in atonement for sinful man. The memory of it reminded me of the depths both of Christianity and of humanism.

The book does raise one theme which must be considered. It is implied in the phrase “secular optimism,” and is the now common theme that secular thought has not recognized the universal tendency to pride and selfishness in human nature and has been utopian. It is assumed that secular idealism crumbles with the crumbling of utopian hopes, and that people will have to believe again in a God who will lend them his grace and in a Utopia which will come “outside history.” It is true that in the doctrine of original sin the body of Christian thought has preserved a truth not always fully recognized by secular thinkers, and that before 1914 reformers had too high hopes of their reforms. But recognition of the universal self-centredness and tendency towards evil of humanity does not prove the existence of God, the truth of the Incarnation or Resurrection. Nor does it shake the humanist in his attempt to cherish and develop sympathy and honesty and self-criticism to the utmost in himself and others. The man who values public spirit and courageous love values them no less for realizing his own frailty; and his commitment to truth and goodness does not depend upon a millennium round the corner. We are all sadder to-day than some reformers were in 1890, but our lack of buoyant hope goes with an even deeper consciousness of evil and so of the need for heroic goodness. Humanists believe in no millennium either on earth or in heaven, but they know the value of goodness in the midst of much evil.

VIRGINIA FLEMMING

SOCIAL PRAGMATISM. By Lan Freed. Pp. 259. Watts & Co., 15s.

If ethics really is of any importance, its present state really is lamentable. After more than three hundred years of continuous intensive discussion, its problems are no nearer an agreed solution, its dissensions are multiplied. The futility of the Greek philosophical schools is repeated. To-day, some talk of a return to the Greeks, some go off into semantics, some into social anthropology; a few want to reconstruct a middle-of-the-road subjectivist theory; scientists propose to solve the problems by science; theologians, of course, are quite happy, and so are those who hold other dogmatic theories of the universe: there is general discontent with traditional philosophical ethics, and particularly with the long reign of the dominant school of intuitionists, holding de-ontological theories. It is easy to see why. The main practical interest of philosophical ethics (when its main interest has not really been theological) has been to establish the reliability of conduct, that is to say, its uniform determination. Unless I can count on the behaviour of others according to established moral expectations, I am back in the bad old state of nature which terrified Hobbes. Unless there is a moral will, if there is only a psychological will, there is no rational order. Thus morality is stiffened by a strong element of convention, can allow little latitude, and approximates to law. Bishop Butler, for example, rejects the tempting theory of utility, not because it proposes the happiness of mankind, but because to act on a calculation of consequences is speculative and subversive, puts everything in question and destroys mutual confidence. Kant by insisting that only a good will is good and only action done for duty's sake is moral, does not mean to belittle, condemn, or destroy the natural springs of action, but to reinforce and remodel them and when necessary take their place, so that they are not capricious but reliable, rationally determined. As Butler puts it: "Thus a parent has the affection of love to his children: this leads him to take care of, to educate, to make due provision for them; the natural affection leads to this: but the reflection that it is his proper business, what belongs to him, that it is right and commendable so to do; this added to the affection, becomes a much more settled principle, and carries him on through more labour and difficulties for the sake of his children, than he would undergo from that affection alone." Intuitionist theories (as distinct from utilitarian theories) are strong, therefore, when current moral expectations are well established and little disturbed, when the social order is settled and social relations are changing little. When, on the contrary, established expectations are very much in question and social relations have greatly changed, such

theories must lose their hold and their influence; must seem pre-occupied with trifles and platitudes, unequal to the genuine and pressing problems of the time, or rank reactionary. At such times, what is wanted most is that we shall stick to the concrete situation, and work out, criticize, and establish the new moral expectations appropriate to the new social relations. A new ethical theory inciting us to emancipate ourselves from the tyranny of the old "ought," and reminding us that the only justification is universal happiness, may or may not be helpful in this task.

Miss Freed will have nothing to do with the ethical ought; she finds that it tampers with the natural springs of action, which are ineradicable and sufficient. On the basis of these natural incentives unimpaired by moral distortions we can discuss together the problem of what is expedient, what in our experience conduces to human advantage. This takes us straight back to Bentham's principle. Miss Freed, like Mill, whose rather unfortunate example she does not seem to recall, even gives the word "desirable" capital significance in her vocabulary of universal benevolence. Of course she disapproves of Sidgwick's refined version of utilitarian theory, with the addition of the ethical ought; but it is strange that she does not recognize her affinity with the earlier theory, and she does indeed glimpse it in Burniston Brown's contribution to the discussion in Waddington's *Science and Ethics*. "The social pragmatist, whose standpoint, for one reason or another, is that of universal benevolence, thinks, when thinking socially, in terms of the relatively desirable and undesirable . . . and uses *no other criterion, whatsoever* for the evaluation of events and entities seen as affecting, or potentially affecting, no matter how minutely, the fortunes of mankind at large. The principles of conduct which he calls *desirable*, are principles of universal expediency, which he does not derive from any other source than past human experience as to what sorts of conduct are most conducive, in given circumstances, to human advantage." This is plainly a version of the utilitarian theory, and in many points strongly recalls Bentham himself.

Why does Miss Freed fail to recognize her affinities, refuse to allow that her view is an ethical theory, and seriously misconceive moralists like Kant whom she has closely studied? It is not any lack of philosophical competence, aptitude, and study. Perhaps it is a strong sense that the superstitions of the past and the present, religious and quasi-religious, are a source of serious and widespread distempers, and that nothing less drastic than a complete break with the past, a dissolution of previous thought, will get rid of them. The ethical ought is the kernel of them all: theologies, metaphysical ideas and assumptions, philosophical duty-systems.

Her critique, her construction, is a solvent. She recognizes explicitly that there is a new social situation in the world which requires a new approach.

Who are the readers who will be purged and enlightened by Miss Freed's book? One is afraid that the students of ethics will not have a lot of patience with it because of its perversities, and that the general public who read it will be rather misled, at least in relation to the history and nature of ethics, which is not of the greatest importance. I am sure that Miss Freed's insistence on reason and happiness (which, although she does not seem to think it, echoes down the ages in ethics) is all to the good. But a decision about the ultimate end (although it has dominated the ethical theory which Miss Freed repudiates) is apt to be either useless or mischievous. I believe it is one of the falsifications we ought to get rid of, if we want a rational and usable theory. Let us be concerned with concrete goods, actual social relations, and possible conflicts of interest: in fact the whole given complex of civilization, rather than the abstraction happiness. An ethical theory here, if not indispensable, need not be futile. This does not mean that the ethical ought should be absolute, quite unconditional; human relations do not admit of that: but in practice it may often have the force of an absolute, and be recognizably different from desire. Miss Freed, because of her horror of the absolute ought for the mischief it has done, does not seem to see that to make the ought conditional (as it is) does not make it in practice really optional.

The book is readable and abounds in excellent units of argument. In spite of its perversities, it deserves to be read and thought about. Considering the present state of ethical theory, it would be no bad thing to start again with Miss Freed. H.J.B.

THE GREAT REHEARSAL. By Carl Van Doren. Viking Press, New York, 1948. \$3.75.

This is the story of the making and ratifying of the U.S. Constitution. The title implies that "the situation (in 1787) was . . . much like that of the sovereign states of the United Nations." The author admits, however: "Nor do those citizens of the world who desire to see a federal world government created assume that the process would have to follow the example of the United States. The Federal Convention did not follow any single example. Neither should a General Conference of the United Nations be expected to."

The fruits of painstaking research, the book records the contentions for and against a constitution for the United States and

purports to provide a criterion by which to judge arguments advocating or opposing a general government for the United Nations. Whatever our opinions on this point, the book should help us to decide what sanctions should enforce the decisions of an international authority. It appears that the American Constitution succeeded because, in the words of Mason, it established a federal government which could "directly operate on individuals, and would punish only those whose guilt required it."

As Ellsworth reasoned: "We see how necessary for the union is the coercive principle . . . The only question is, shall it be a coercion of law, or a coercion of arms? I am for coercion by law—that coercion which acts only upon delinquent individuals. This constitution does not attempt to coerce sovereign bodies, states, in their political capacity."

Would that such wisdom had prevailed in 1919, or at San Francisco!

HAROLD S. BIDMEAD

A RATIONALIST ENCYCLOPAEDIA. By Joseph McCabe. Pp. 633. Watts & Co., 21s.

In any field of interest, the dictionary is not only a useful work of reference but also a fascinating source of intellectual pleasure: the connected variety of the topics and the crispness of the treatment deliciously stir the "apperception masses," reviving for new examination or comparison familiar, cherished, or half-forgotten ideas, filling in gaps and building out new members. When the dictionary is the work of one mind the pleasure is doubled, for again there is the variety in unity; throughout the range of the work one encounters in new contexts the same prejudices and the same informing interest and force of mind. This is all abundantly true of Joseph McCabe's new dictionary, for anyone interested in Rationalism. One of the oldest, most respected and redoubtable champions of Rationalism, he has the force and the encyclopaedic range to do this job incomparably. Many of the 1,800 articles are biographical, and many years ago Mr. McCabe compiled a biographical dictionary of Rationalists. But much the most interesting and useful service of this work is in Mr. McCabe's account of religious, philosophical, and scientific topics from a Rationalist point of view. With the result that here is Voltairean Rationalism putting itself on trial before the modern mind: parading its distinguished exponents and adherents, declaring its loves and its hates, defining its aims and its standards of judgment, not at large and in general but in the flesh and blood of concrete contexts and vital issues. For this reason, Mr. McCabe's book is a bold and an important publication, exposing Rationalism in its

strength and in its weakness, providing materials for an assessment and a summing up. Not that Rationalism is, or ever can be, finished, with its work done and laid by. But there are epochs in Rationalism as in everything else, and Mr. McCabe necessarily looks back on an epoch that is past. If his book can teach a new generation to appreciate and respect the solid virtues of their fathers, without forgetting to temper and establish their own, that would be a great contribution to the vitality and continuity of the Rationalist cause.

The only question is shall it be . . . The corrective principle . . .

THE FREE MIND. A Quarterly Critical Review. Edited by Patrick Benner and Irene James. Double Number, Autumn, 1948.

This double number of our contemporary makes such good reading that it is an occasion for congratulation not to be missed. It is in the main written by younger Rationalists for younger Rationalists, and chiefly for those who are making their minds and their opinions at the universities. If it is supposed by anyone that since Rationalists, on principle and by profession are always making and remaking their minds and opinions, they have accidentally found the secret of eternal youth and always discuss everything with charming freshness and candour, that is an idea which must be rebuked, for it would entail a miracle, that is to say, an unnatural and monstrous thing, an impossibility. But in adolescence, when youth is unaffected and the making and unmaking of opinions is genuinely all in the day's work, fresh and candid discussion is not a miracle: but it is almost as rare. If it is to be found anywhere one might look for it amongst young Rationalists, and in the pages of this journal it does indeed appear, which is highest praise. A journal in which lively young minds with a rationalist bent feel their way and have their say, and in which older heads, not too sticky with prejudice and pedantry, write suggestively, remembering their youth, is a brave enterprise addressed to an infinite need. **THE FREE MIND**, we feel shows the right combination of qualities, the right outlook and policy, for its great purpose. We wish its editors and sponsors a good response and all the success they deserve on the showing of their present achievement.

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CORRESPONDENCE

Humanism versus(?) Christianity

In the March *News and Notes* of the Ethical Union Mr. W. A. Ross comments on an article in the immediately previous issue, in which Mr. Blackham had placed Humanism and Christianity in apparently exclusive opposition to one another, and expresses regret that this antagonism should exist at the present time. The immediate occasion of Mr. Ross's letter was a reference which Mr. Blackham had made to my Croall Lectures on *Humanism and Christianity*, and I am grateful to Mr. Ross for bringing out the purpose of my book, which is to show that humanism, when it understands its own implications, is not necessarily opposed to Christianity. Mr. Ross does not quite fully express my meaning when he says that certain Christian dogmas have in my view "only a symbolic significance, a statement in concrete terms of a metaphysical subtlety." I would assign more fundamental importance to the "concrete terms." The whole question is of the interpretative value of certain facts as illuminating the comprehensive divine-human situation in which they occur.

Mr. Ross says that in my book I offer a welcome to Humanism, Mr. Blackham does not deny this, but disdains the welcome on the ground that it is not humanism which is welcomed. I am alleged to be indulging in a species of "bluff," or, at the least, to be taking up a patronising attitude to humanism in suggesting that it is really "half-hearted Christianity," slightly forgetful of its origin, and that it only needs on the part of humanists a little readiness to shed out-of-date naturalistic conceptions, and a little encouragement of them on the part of broad-minded Christians, to bring them all the way into the Christian fold. Mr. Blackham's attitude to what might be described as the metaphysical use of Christian concepts, is to some extent similar to that of the late Professor John Laird, a former president of the Ethical Union. In an article on "Finality in Theology" which appeared in *Philosophy* in July, 1945, Professor Laird takes exception to the claim that such concepts, especially those which are related to historical events, are our "only clue to theology, metaphysics and all such fundamental enquiries." But Professor Laird, after considerable philosophic diffidence at an earlier stage in his career, became much more favourable to a theistic position than is Mr. Blackham. For Laird, Christian doctrines are at least "clues," whereas for Mr. Blackham they seem to be a will-o'-the-wisp, leading to the marshes of escapism.

In any case, Mr. Blackham repudiates actual or possible

indebtedness of Humanism to Christianity. According to him Humanism is "not founded on Christian assumptions, and owes nothing to them"—surely a statement which has hardly sufficient historical justification. He holds that, on the contrary, humanism is a "positive independent construction on the solid ground of its own acceptance," and its rejection of Christian doctrine is "serious and deadly." His complaint is that neither Christians nor humanists take each other with sufficient seriousness. I do not question that the opposition of such humanists as Mr. Blackham is serious and deadly, but my doubt is as to whether it is logical. My main point is not that humanists should enter into an alliance with Christianity in order to make themselves secure and respectable, but that, remaining out-and-out humanists, they should consider the implications of their own position. I feel that there cannot be "out-and-out" humanism, simply because human nature is not self-contained. It exists within a cosmos which has meaning, and that meaning involves transcendence of the merely human. The human being cannot exist by himself any more than he can breathe in a vacuum. Contrariwise, and for much the same reasons, I would say that Christianity is essentially humanism because its main direction is towards the welfare of man, and, further, it is the only possible humanism because it stresses the logical and necessary completion of the humanist endeavour in relation to the cosmic environment. The relationship is out-reaching and ends in a divine human encounter which no humanist who takes his own arguments with full seriousness can escape.

Mr. Blackham's article in the *Plain View* for October, entitled "A Return to Christian Doctrine," really strengthens my position. In the course of a review of Niebuhr's Gifford Lectures, he rebukes Niebuhr for escapism and an obsession with out-of-date absolute Idealism, and, on the other hand, he commends the humanist because he "founds his hopes and conceptions and ideals on what seems to be possible." The whole argument in this connection leaves one with the impression that the ethical creed set forth is like a rope hanging in the air without attachment. It is not in human nature to be content merely with going on and on, without any regard to a "pattern in the heavens" or however you may describe man's completer environment. The reply that there is no heaven and that that is all that can be said without dogmatic assumption, shatters itself against the undeniable fact that even one step in the going on and on, demands an ideal, and the ideal demands the real, otherwise it could not come into existence even as an ideal.

Mr. Blackham's more particular argument, in criticism of Niebuhr's escapism, that the sacrificial love which is central in

Christianity, transcends history, cannot justify itself within history, as mutual love can, and is therefore a beating of the air which diverts attention from effective moral effort, seems to involve a misinterpretation of Christianity. It is only on a narrow view that sacrificial love can be regarded as an empty process eliciting no response. As Mr. Blackham himself suggests, it is "accomplishing the divine will," and, inasmuch as it is directed towards the response of the whole creation, including pre-eminently man, it is ultimately indistinguishable from mutual love, and is thus unhindered from being as effective on the historical plan as Mr. Blackham claims that "mutual love" can be.

W. S. URQUHART

I take Dr. Urquhart's argument to be that Christianity, when it unfolds its implications, is an unchallengeable humanism, the supreme champion of human interests, and humanism when it courageously follows its own argument finds a natural consummation in Christianity. He finds an out-and-out Christian faith, like that of Barth, a distortion; and he finds out-and-out humanism an absurd obstinacy.

Undoubtedly, history shows a persistent tendency in the Christian faith to develop specific forms of Christian humanism. I will not question whether they are logical, and I will certainly agree that most forms of Christian humanism (not all) are more congenial to humanists, more possible to understand and to work with, than stark theologies of crisis.

The other part of Dr. Urquhart's argument baffles me. Why is the humanist *logically* involved in accepting the Christian faith? Why is his endeavour and his own consciousness of himself necessarily incomplete, like a broken arch, making nonsense without a recognition of the missing part? I can understand an idealist view, that everything is contained in and determined by a pre-existing whole. But I regard such a view as a false analogy, and I know of no reason which compels me to hold it. The human mind aestheticizes both its practical and its theoretical activities, but the first is no justification of the second; much less does it involve it by necessity. When such Christian thinkers as Pascal or Kierkegaard or Unamuno say that although they recognize the Christian faith as absurd they must nevertheless believe it because otherwise everything is impossible and intolerable, the necessity is obviously psychological and not logical. There are plenty of people who are not constrained by that necessity. If (*per impossibile*) I were to be assured that the doctrine of the Incarnation is true, I should have to adjust my mind and life to it; and I should find not that

it made sense of my experience, but that it made nonsense of all that I know and am. My perception and conviction that my personal being is bound up with my material organization and all the experience that has been created by means of it and in terms of it, so that any other form of existence for me is inconceivable and impossible in the sense of meaningless, would be shattered: that is, I should be shattered in my own central awareness of myself. I can imagine nothing so spiritually annihilating. It is absurd to say that I am compelled logically by my self-awareness and my experience to hold such a view. I can only be compelled logically to draw an inescapable conclusion in a formal deductive system; and I am sure Dr. Urquhart is too good a philosopher to mean that my being a humanist puts me in that position.

It simply does remain that Christianity and out-and-out humanism are mutually exclusive, and I really do emphatically protest against the wholly unjustifiable assumption that this is mere obstinacy or ignorance on the part of humanists: it must be allowed to be the mature consensus of the whole person—when it is so: a lifelong, understanding, massive commitment and rejection by the whole personality, not a mistake in logic. If this concession results, as it must, in Christians and humanists being unintelligible to each other, that is a pity, but it cannot be helped. H.J.B.

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